

An Interview with
Glenn Chambers

at his home in
Columbia, Missouri

23 May 2011

interviewed by Jeff Corrigan



Oral History Program
The State Historical Society of Missouri
© 2011

Collection C3966

Missouri Environmental

CD 57-58

NOTICE

- 1) This material may be protected by copyright law (Title 17, U.S. Code). It may not be cited without acknowledgment to The State Historical Society of Missouri, a joint collection of the University of Missouri and the State Historical Society of Missouri. Citations should include: Missouri Environmental Oral History Project, Collection Number C3966, [name of interviewee], [date of interview], The State Historical Society of Missouri.

- 2) Reproductions of this transcript are available for reference use only and cannot be reproduced or published in any form (including digital formats) without written permission from The State Historical Society of Missouri.

- 3) Use of information or quotations from any Missouri Environmental Oral History Collection transcript indicates agreement to indemnify and hold harmless the University of Missouri, the State Historical Society of Missouri, their officers, employees, and agents, and the interviewee from and against all claims and actions arising out of the use of this material.

For further information, contact:

The State Historical Society of Missouri
University of Missouri
1020 Lowry Street
Columbia, MO 65201-5149

PREFACE

Glenn Chambers was born on a grain farm in Bates County, Missouri on June 14, 1936. He grew up loving the outdoors and first got into ornithology by reading a book about birds in the first grade. Before attending college, Chambers took a self-paced course on taxidermy, where he learned to stuff birds. He then graduated from Central Missouri State University in 1958 and got a Masters of Arts in Wildlife Management at the University of Missouri in 1960. Chambers was hired right out of school by the Missouri Department of Conservation as a biologist. He worked there until 1979, when he was hired by Ducks Unlimited as a fundraiser and then as a photographer. He then returned to the department of conservation in 1989 and retired in 1995.

After publishing a photo of a ruffed grouse on the cover of *Missouri Conservationist*, Chambers worked as a research biologist and a cinematographer for the conservation department from 1971 to 1979, and then again from 1989 to 1995. The first film he worked on was the only film at that time about wild turkeys. He shot and edited films designed to promote conservation efforts and educate Missourians about the local wildlife. He won four TV Emmys through these movies. After retiring in 1995, Chambers created Paddlefoot Productions, a company run by him and his wife. The goal of Paddlefoot Productions was to educate children about otter conservation, using the captive otters Chambers had. Over the next few years, Paddlefoot Productions toured around Missouri and surrounding states putting on shows. Following his retirement, Chambers spent the rest of his life working with different organizations and boards to promote conservation in Missouri. Glenn Chambers passed away in July 2017.

The interview was taped on a CompactFlash card, using a Marantz PMD-660 digital recorder and an audio-technica AT825 microphone placed on a tripod. There are periodic background sounds but the recording is of generally high quality.

The following transcript represents a rendering of the oral history interview. Stylistic alterations have been made as part of a general transcription policy. The interviewee offered clarifications and suggestions, which the following transcript reflects. Any use of brackets [] indicates editorial insertions not found on the original audio recordings. Physical gestures, certain vocal inflections such as imitation, and/or pauses are designated by a combination of italics and brackets [/]. Any use of parentheses () indicates a spoken aside evident from the speaker's intonation, or laughter. Quotation marks [“”] identify speech depicting dialogue, speech patterns, or the initial use of nicknames. Em dashes [—] are used as a stylistic method to show a meaningful pause or an attempt to capture nuances of dialogue or speech patterns. Words are *italicized* when emphasized in speech or when indicating a court case title. Particularly animated speech is identified with **bold** lettering. Underlining [] indicates a proper title of a publication. The use of underlining and double question marks in parentheses [(??)] denotes unintelligible phrases. Although substantial care has been taken to render this transcript as accurately as possible, any remaining errors are the responsibility of the editor, Sean Rost.

***Please note that Glenn Chambers passed away before this transcript was finished, so he was not able to review it or clarify any points.**

Narrator: Glenn Chambers
Interviewer: Jeff Corrigan
Date: May 23, 2011
Transcribed by: Teresa Bergen

5

[Begin Interview.]

[Begin Track One.]

10

Chambers: Is it okay if I just sit right here like this?

Corrigan: Yeah.

15

Chambers: Okay.

Corrigan: However you're comfortable is all that matters.

Chambers: All right.

20

Corrigan: This is Jeff Corrigan, oral historian for the State Historical Society of Missouri. And I'm in Columbia, Missouri, at the home of Glenn Chambers. Mr. Chambers is being interviewed for the first time today for our Missouri Environmental Oral History Project. Today's date is Monday, May 23, 2011. Let's begin. Can you start by telling me when and where you were born?

25

Chambers: I was born at home on a farm in Bates County, near the small town of Passaic. It's between the town of Adrian and Butler, Missouri, in Bates County. So I didn't come into this world in a fancy hospital anywhere. It was in a four-room house, which the doctor came there and delivered me.

30

Corrigan: And when was that?

Chambers: That was June the fourteenth, 1936.

35

Corrigan: Okay. Did you have any siblings?

Chambers: Yes. Siblings include—I'm the older of the four. I have a sister, Joan, J-o-a-n, just J-o-a-n. And I have a brother, Ronnie, R-o-n-n-i-e. And another brother, Randy, R-a-n-d-y. There's the four of us.

40

Corrigan: So three boys and one girl.

Chambers: Right.

45

Corrigan: And you said your parents were farmers?

Chambers: Yes. They owned at that time, that was during the Depression, they owned a farm that time where I was born. And during the Depression, things got really bad. Dad lost the farm. And at age one-and-a-half, we moved to Idaho. Where he could get a job in the fields picking up Idaho potatoes.

Corrigan: And then when did you move back?

Chambers: We were out there at Shoshone Falls for a couple of years. Then he came back and got a job as a farm manager near Lee's Summit, working for Loula Long Combs at Longview Farm.

Corrigan: When you had the farm, what kind of crops or livestock did you have?

Chambers: It was all grain farming. We had some horses that did the work. Draft horses. But it was a grain farm.

Corrigan: Now these weren't mules, they were horses?

Chambers: No. They were draft horses. Yes.

Corrigan: Okay. And you said you left there about one-and-a-half years old?

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: Now did you spend a lot of time outdoors on the farm?

Chambers: Yes. My grandparents continued to live in that area. They had a farm not very far away. And the grandparents on my father's side lived in the same vicinity. And they were able to survive on their farm. So, yeah, I spent a lot of time with them in the summertime. And also with my mother's parents, which lived over in, they lived over by Clinton, Missouri. And so I spent a lot of my summertimes with them. So all of my younger—when I was a little guy everything was farm-oriented. I lived, you know, and when Dad got a job managing other property, it was always a farm-type job. So I never had the luxuries of town living at all. I lived in the country. And, you know, one-room schools and outdoor privies. All that. That was a way of life back then. It was no big deal. Everybody was like that, pretty much.

Corrigan: Now were your mom's parents farmers, too?

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: And everybody was from Missouri.

Chambers: Yes.

Corrigan: Now you said you attended a one-room schoolhouse.

Chambers: Yes.

5 Corrigan: What was the name of the school?

Chambers: It was Cedar Hill. And it was located just west of the town of Lee's Summit. And Cedar Hill School. We had eight grades. I was the—I became a student there when I was a first grader. And I was one of two first grade students.

10

[End Track One. Begin Track Two.]

Chambers: And then the second year, the person, the little boy that was my classmate for the first year, his parents moved away. So in year two, I was the only student in the second grade. But the whole classroom, probably there was not more than, in the total classroom, probably not more than twenty of us total.

15

Corrigan: And did you go from first through eighth grade there?

Chambers: No, uh-uh. I went from first grade, second grade. Then they closed the school. They consolidated the educational district. Then I went west of there because I lived in between Lee's Summit and Grandview. Then we went to Grandview, we were transported from our farm on a regular bus route. With a homemade bus, I might add. So starting in the third grade, I went to the big school, elementary school in Grandview, Missouri.

25

Corrigan: Okay. Could you describe the physical building? Inside and out, what you remember it looked like? How big it was?

Chambers: The building was just a typical square one-room deal, one-room building. The rows of desks, the first-graders got to sit on the first row, the second graders on the second row, the third-graders and clear on back to the back of the school. We all had the same sized desk. We all faced forward. And when you come in off the concrete stoop out in front of the schoolhouse, there was what we called a cloakroom where everybody hung their garments, their winter garments, their coats and overshoes and things like that. And then go to class and go up front and open your desk and get your books out. And the teacher would call the whole thing to order. It was really a pretty neat experience. There was—we must have had a certain mode of concentration back then that a lot of kids probably suffer of now, because there was no, I was not concerned when the teacher was teaching eighth graders. I had my homework to do and I was over there, busy. I was into art pretty good, and I'd be drawing pictures of bird dogs pointing quail and deer jumping over fences and things like that. But I was never, you know, confused or involved very much in what, or at least I didn't think I was, involved in what the other kids were doing at the same time.

35

40

Corrigan: Was it a typical white school? Was it red? Was it—

45

Chambers: It was white exterior and had a green roof. And we just, you know, there's a big blackboard up in front. Picture of George Washington over here on the side. American flag over here. And the teacher had a desk of her own up there and a work table. And that was about it. Windows on the side. No windows on the back. And there weren't any windows up front because you were looking that way. The light all came in from each side.

Corrigan: Was there outhouses? Or was there a bathroom inside?

Chambers: No, it was an outhouse deal. Yeah, it was an outhouse. And you know, they, schoolhouse was apparently on some donated property. Because the people that owned it cut hay and stacked hay out in the schoolyard. I mean, a big haystack. And with most kids, we had a heck of a good time running, playing around the haystack and sliding off the top of it, and all that good stuff. But it was a fun time. And I was the littlest one in the class. And the eighth-graders took a love to me, or even the sixth and seventh-graders. And they'd carry me around on their back. And I was like the baby lamb of the bunch. So I got really, really special treatment. And I really enjoyed that, of course. Some of the students that were in that classroom—

[End Track Two. Begin Track Three]

Chambers: —two of them, one is Bud Hertzog. He's now a veterinarian and they're in Lee's Summit. I went to school, he was in the eighth grade when I was in the first grade. And he had a brother that also became, Jim, who also became a veterinarian. But they both went from, I think they may have gone to school at Lee's Summit or maybe at Grandview. I don't recall. But anyway, those two guys were in the same one-room school I was. And they ended up being veterinarians. Came down here at the University of Missouri. Got their veterinarian degrees. One of them is retired now down in the Ozarks. And the other one, Bud, is still an active veterinarian. They're in Lee Summit, a well known, great, accomplished guy. Smart as a whip. And he's big time in all the civic affairs up there. And he's a community leader. Great person. I always see him down here on the campus now. I attend things like, oh, the ag school auction. And we have fundraisers for the vet school. And Bud always comes down for that. So I get to visit with him at least twice a year.

Corrigan: And you went to school with both of them. Do you keep in contact with anybody else that you went to school with? Or that you see ever?

Chambers: No. Pretty much. I kind of lost track of those kids. The Buell boys, B-u-e-l-l, there was three of them. And they live close to us. We had to walk to school. We lived a mile away and walked every day. You know, Dad was busy on the farm and didn't have time to haul us. And so we walked to school. But I've kept up with those kids up till we got to high school. And when we got to high school we kind of split up. And I guess the only reason I've stayed in touch with Bud and Jim was through my association with them was through my association back down here once I came down here and went to school. Kind of got involved in the community here. Got interested in the ag school things. And then we crossed paths again.

Corrigan: Now did everybody walk? Or did anybody—because at some one-room schoolhouses, some people rode horses to school. Some people—

5 Chambers: Yeah. Some people rode horses to school. And we tied them out there by the haystack. Because they could stand there all day long and eat hay. Yeah, it was kind of fun. Some of the kids did ride their horses to school. And yeah, I can remember one year, or probably the first or second year, there was a nest of bumblebees in the haystack. And then wow, we found those bumblebees and we all got stung. It was quite a deal. When we misbehaved, Miss Smalley, S-m-a-l-l-e-y was our teacher. And she was an unmarried lady.
10 Very, very, a beautiful young lady. And really smart. And she would discipline us with, she'd go make us cut our own switches to get a right good whipping with if we misbehaved. But there wasn't too much of that. A little bit of that went a long ways. So we had a lot of fun. It was a great experience.

15 Corrigan: Was she your teacher both years?

Chambers: Yes. She was the teacher both years. Yes.

20 Corrigan: When the school closed, did they tear it down?

Chambers: No, the building, I think, is still there today. I haven't been out that road for, but I know the last time I was out there four or five years ago, it was still there. But I was talking to Bud, Dr. Hertzog about it, when I saw him over at the ag school auction here a few weeks ago. And he said the old school was still there.

25 Corrigan: Did it revert back to the farmer who owned the property?

30 Chambers: I don't know. I think they deeded that, I think they deeded that piece of property to the school district. That's my recollection. Don't quote me on that, because I think it's still one entity. The building and the property.

Corrigan: Okay. Because a lot of them were converted into homes, converted into—

35 Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: —storage, shops, sheds.

Chambers: Sure. Sure.

40 Corrigan: If you knew what happened to that one, if it just sits empty or—

Chambers: I don't know.

45 Corrigan: Did you learn a lot from listening to the other kids? It sounds like earlier, you didn't necessarily pay—you could kind of focus them out. But—

[End Track Three. Begin Track Four.]

5 Corrigan: —did you always knew what was coming? You knew what the second graders were doing. If you'd stayed that long, you would have known what the eighth graders were doing?

10 Chambers: Sure. Sure. Right. Yeah. You know, throughout the day, we'd have recess and we had time for lunch, and then recess in the afternoon. And you was always sort of subconsciously cognizant of what was going on. And she would bring up things, I was so outdoor-oriented being in a rural situation like this. She'd be talking to the kids, or some of them would say they saw a coyote run across the road on the way to school or something. Of course, my ears perked up on that. So I did follow what was some form of recognition of what was going on in the class around me. But as far as concentrating on what the eighth-graders were doing and what their arithmetic was like and all that stuff, I didn't do that.

15 Corrigan: And you mention recess. You mention morning and afternoon and at lunch. Do you remember how long a time period all those were? Or do you remember any of the games you played?

20 Chambers: Yes. Yeah. Oh, we played, man, we played all those good old games. Like Annie Over. And Ring Around the Rosy. Those—I can't remember all the names of them. But you know, we'd play like that Annie Over because our schoolhouse was shaped with just a steeple roof like that where you could throw the ball over the top. Someone over there would catch it and run around the corner and slam you with it. Yeah, we had all those good old country type games. And everybody seemed to get along fine. You know, the bigger kids were gentle with us smaller ones. And there wasn't any, there wasn't a bunch of fighting or carrying on. I never, ever saw a fistfight on the school grounds. Or any rough talk that I can recall.

30 Corrigan: Was it about fifteen minutes, each recess?

35 Chambers: No, I think recess was longer than that. I think our recesses ran about twenty minutes. And the lunch hour was at least forty. And of course we all carried our own lunchboxes. And my mother would put a spoon and something in my lunch box. And some of those kids ride horses. And when they went riding by, you shake your lunch box with that spoon and fork in there, you can rattle like that. And I mean, the horses bolted. (laughs) It was funny. And threw some of them off. Then they're yeah-yeahing at you about that. (laughs) But kids will be kids, okay?

40 Corrigan: What did you typically get packed in your lunch each day?

45 Chambers: Oh, I can remember, I had a little pink lunchbox. It just had a squish on lid. The lid didn't fold back or anything. The lid was independent of the lunchbox. And it had a little thermos bottle in there. Then Mom would always fix, oh, I liked the ham and cheese sandwiches. And she'd put a ham and cheese sandwich and a cookie. And usually a little note in there for my daily thought or something like that. Yeah, it was, and I can remember that

little oval-shape lunchbox and the lid that went on it. It had a little fold-up handle. You could grab it and pack it right along with you.

5 Corrigan: Do you remember performing any chores at the school?

Chambers: Oh, yeah, it seemed we had to—there was a pump for water. We had a water bucket and a pump. We had to go get water from that pump. And it was a groundwater well. And you know, we had a lot of fun splashing each other and stuff like that. And us little guys weren't big enough to carry the bucket by ourselves. So we had to have one of the older kids go with us and help us pack the bucket. But we learned right away to share the responsibility for getting the water. And I don't recall what other little chores there were. But I do remember that one.

15 Corrigan: Did you all have individual cups? Or was it the ladle?

Chambers: I think it was the ladle type where we all drank out of the same bucket. (laughs) Dipped her down in there and took a swig of it and put the, put the—

[End Track Four. Begin Track Five.]

20 Chambers: —and put the ladle back in the bucket and you could hear it go clink, clink, clink, and clank to the bottom, okay? (laughs) Yep. That was the deal.

25 Corrigan: Do you remember if the school was heated with wood, coal?

Chambers: It was, as I recall, it was heated with coal. I remember we had a big, round—yeah, there was, because there was a coal depository just outside the door. And we had to gather, take a coal bucket, what we called it, coal bucket out there and scoop some coal into the bucket and bring it in. And put it in the—the teacher or one of the older boys would put the fuel in the fire. But it was a round, pot-bellied stove.

30 Corrigan: Do you remember any kind of activities? Did you have a program around the holidays? Did you have a—was the school ever used for social events? I know some things that are common are pie suppers or fundraisers or Christmas programs?

35 Chambers: Yeah. Yeah.

Corrigan: Did you guys do any of those?

40 Chambers: Yeah. We did the pie suppers and the Christmas programs. We all had to do our little act. Yeah, it was pretty country, but it was fun. And you know, there weren't enough of us that the thing took fourteen hours to do. It was over pretty quick. Yeah, we did. We participated in those activities.

45 Corrigan: And was the pie supper a fundraiser? Was it one where—because I've learned that a lot of people say they have pie suppers. And then they describe it very differently. Some of

them, it was a fundraiser where they auctioned off the pie, whoever made it. Then they sat down and ate with them, maybe different family.

5 Chambers: Yeah. That's the way ours worked. Yeah. It was a kind of a fundraiser deal. And I don't recall what they spent the money for. But it went for something to reinvest in the school program. New books or something or other.

Corrigan: Did you have any other programs? Or just around Christmas?

10 Chambers: I think we had a party right at the first of school, so everybody could get to know who everyone was. And then of course the last day of school, that was always a big deal because, you know, there was no, there was nothing done in a prescribed way. It was just kind of fly by the seat of your pants on the last day of school. And it was just a fun day. And I can remember getting report cards, it was just a fold-out report card, your name on the
15 front. Then it had the different subjects that were offered and how you did. Yeah. It was pretty elementary, I'll tell you that.

Corrigan: Do you remember if it was, the report card, was it actually letter grades, A, B, C? Or was it satisfactory, unsatisfactory? Do you remember if it was actually the letter system or
20 not?

Chambers: I'm trying to recall, I know that there was little squares. I think there was, I think it gave the subject over here to the left. Then about four boxes. And was graded with excellent being over here and poor being over here. And there was just a checkmark
25 wherever you fit. Best I can recall, that's the way it was. And I think that's right.

Corrigan: Do you think you got a quality education?

Chambers: Yeah, I think so. It sure gave me a different start. But it was a real shocker when
30 I encountered the school in town. (laughs) I was used to being pampered and carried around on people's backs and being the only little guy and all that stuff. And boy, listen, when you hit the big time, it was a rude awakening, I'll tell you that. Because everybody was the same, and there was bullies. And you know, I was a bashful little guy. I wasn't aggressive at all. And those guys would bully me around. And yeah, it was kind of uncomfortable there right
35 at the beginning when I first started back to school, when I was in third grade, when I started to the school in town.

Corrigan: Before we move on from the one-room schoolhouses, is there any other thing that happened there or story or anything that sticks out in your mind about the one-room
40 schoolhouse?

Chambers: No. I can just remember the walks from home. We lived a mile away from where the school was. And—

45 **[End Track Five. Begin Track Six.]**

Chambers: —you know, I can remember walking to school. The Buell boys, we all kind of lived in a conglomerate. Mrs. Combs that had Long View Farms, which was just about a mile away, and there were several employees there that had kids. And we would, we'd meet each other and walk to school in kind of a little cluster. And have snowball fights on the way, and all that good stuff. But I do remember the walks to school. And you know, in real inclement weather, my mother, who was busy helping on the farm, didn't have time to haul any kids to school. And of course I was the oldest one, see. I'm two years older than my sister. So when I was six, she was four. And so, yeah, I remember the walks to school.

10 Corrigan: So you would have been the only one in your family to attend the one-room schoolhouse.

Chambers: That's right. Yeah.

15 Corrigan: And then the rest, everybody else after you just attended the same, the in-town school.

Chambers: Yep.

20 Corrigan: And what was the name of that one again?

Chambers: In Grandview.

Corrigan: Grandview.

25

Chambers: Yeah. Grandview, Missouri.

Corrigan: Before I forget, I do remember reading one article about you. And it talked about, there was an Audubon book?

30

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: Did the school have a little library? The one-room schoolhouse?

35 Chambers: Yeah, we had a, it was a makeshift library. But the books were stood on edge in kind of a bookshelf-like deal. And yeah, John J. Audubon had a portfolio book. It was, probably, I have one like it in the other room.

Corrigan: Probably the fourteen by eleven or—

40

Chambers: Yeah, something like that, it was about that, yeah, it was at least eleven by fourteen. And that was my favorite book, because it had all the birds in it. And you know, in my time that I wasn't working on an assignment, I'd go there, the teacher would let me go over there and get that big old book. And it was about all I could do to carry the thing.

45 Because they are like heavy. I've got one in there if you want to see it. But anyway, it had all the birds in North America. And boy, that was my favorite pastime, getting that book and

looking at it. And then I can remember back in those days you could get Ralston bran flakes. And they had little bird flashcards in there in the breakfast food box. And I can remember getting pictures of starlings and sparrows and all kinds of birds. And I'd truck out in the backyard, and looking around comparing what I saw with what was on the card. And that's
5 where I really got my start in ornithology, and ended up teaching ornithology here at the university when I was a graduate student. Yeah, the birding was a big part of my elementary life. But, you know, didn't have any money to buy binoculars with. Didn't have a pair of binoculars, wow, till after I'd gotten married. When I was in graduate school. So it was just look and see. Get close and see what you got.

10

Corrigan: I read somewhere that you had a lot of different pets when you were growing up on the farm.

Chambers: Yeah. Yeah.

15

Corrigan: Could you talk about some of those? I read you had pet crows, raccoons, squirrels.

Chambers: Yeah, we had a pet crow. When you're in the rural environment, and I was the oldest of the three of us at that time. My younger brother came along later in life, but the
20 three of us. And so Ronnie and Joan were fairly close to each other, so they kind of did their own thing. And I was older. I was two years older. And so my thing was connecting with wildlife, with pets. And so in the rural environment, and there weren't laws prohibiting keeping skunks in captivity or keeping baby coyotes or crows or any of those critters. You know, if you could catch one and tame it, get it when it was little and imprint it to you, it
25 worked out fine. Yeah. I had a number of little fox squirrels. I had two fox squirrels that were littermates. I had raccoons. I had a crow. I had two crows.

[End Track Six. Begin Track Seven.]

30

Chambers: Yeah, baby coyote. Yeah, I had a lot of exposure to those critters. And of course then I had my own little dog, a little rat terrier. So we all lived a happy little outdoor family.

Corrigan: Did you have regular chores as a child?

35

Chambers: Yup. My chore, yup, right, early on were fairly lightweight. Later on they got heavier as things progressed. But early on, it was fill up the coal bucket every night. Bring it in so we had coal to get through the night. Then they came out with a product called coke, c-
o-k-e, which was a refinement of heavier oil. And coke was really lightweight and it burnt really well. Put out a lot of heat. So Dad finally decided to shift from coal over to coke, and
40 that's what we heated our home with for a long time.

Corrigan: And you said you didn't have any livestock. So no chickens or anything?

45

Chambers: Yeah, we had, yeah, we had, we had chickens. We had—I had a whole collection of, a person who went to our church was into gamecocks, okay? He didn't match them up and fight them, because that was illegal. But anyway, we had a bunch of gamecocks that, and

I had, you know, probably four or five different varieties. There's all kinds of them. There's war horse and spangles. There's different ones. And so he would give me those when they were babies. So I'd make like a little A-frame and put a little stump out there in front for them to get up on and perch and crow. And had a band on them so they could go back into their little house. Yeah, I had several pet chickens like that. Of course, we had bird dogs and coon hounds and regular menagerie of critters. But as far as having livestock to feed or nothing, that was all done out at the barn. I didn't have nothing to do with that.

10 Corrigan: Okay. I didn't know if you had to go collect eggs each morning or if you—

Chambers: No, no, uh-uh.

Corrigan: Okay. What kinds of things did you do for fun as a kid?

15 Chambers: Everything I did was outdoor-oriented. There was nothing, there was no attraction to keep you in the house. There was no modern games like kids have today. You ask them, "Why don't you go outside?" "Well, the plug-ins are in the house." Okay, so the plug-ins are in the house. But we didn't worry where the plug-ins were. We were lucky to have a plug-in, to even have electricity. Because we had outdoor plumbing and the whole
20 nine yards. So everything that I grew up with and enjoyed doing was all wrapped around having to bring milk cow up in the evening so she could get milked, and get on my pony and go help the threshing crew. And I had a little dog that went with me all the time. I had a little spotted Shetland pony. So you know, all those things were my way of life in the morning. And you know, when school was out, we took off our shoes. We didn't wear shoes all
25 summer long. And we could run down those gravel roads, and out through those wheat fields chasing baby rabbits or whatever. And no big deal. I mean, we toughened our feet up and stayed that way. And it hurt in the fall when you put, had to start putting shoes on. Because man oh man, nothing fit right. And it was quite a rural environment. But you know, I can remember when I was a little bitty kid, I mean, when I was like six, seven, when I was about
30 eight years old, you know, for Christmas every year, all I wanted was a farm set. And they had nice big—

[End Track Seven. Begin Track Eight.]

35 Chambers: —not plastic models like they have now, but just a cardboard cutout or something like that with the little wooden standard in it where you stuck it down in there. And it had horses and cows and sheep. And whatever. Anyway, you know, I'd get a farm set every Christmas as long as—wow, I was clear up, I was clear probably fifth or sixth grade before I quit getting farm sets for Christmas. And I can remember, I was pretty innovative. I
40 can remember I would make my own combines. You could buy a little tractor at the store. A little iron-wheeled tractors. But they didn't make combines and things for them. Or at least, like they do now. So I'd cut and whack down there in the shop and make me a combine. And then I'd design it so I could pull it behind my tractor. And I can remember that I used to, we had a lot of sheep on the place where we lived. So I'd take these limestone rocks, I'd find the
45 one that was kind of oblong-like. And I'd paint it white like a sheep. And man, I'd play out there in the dust and the dirt behind the house. And you know, that was my entertainment.

Ronnie and Joan were off doing something else. And here, I was out here, you know, having fun playing all by myself. But I was into the farm bit, okay? Everything I did, most of the stuff I did was oriented around farm critters.

5 Corrigan: What kind of outdoor activities did you and your family do? Did you do any hunting? Fishing?

Chambers: Yeah, we did all of it. As I got older, my father took—I was the hunting type. My—Joan and Ronnie, neither had anything to do with hunting. But I, Daddy would take me
10 hunting and take me fishing. He took them, too, but they didn't take to it like I did. And it was just kind of a way of life with me. I'd get my fishing rod and I'd jump on my pony and go down to the creek and fish. Or get on my bike, finally saved up enough money or whatever to get a bike. And I could ride down to the creek instead of riding my horse. Yeah, but it was all outdoor-oriented stuff. And yeah, the hunting and the fishing, Dad did a lot of
15 that with us kids. But you know, most of them didn't like it very well. I enjoyed camping out and mosquito bites and stuff like that. And my brother and sister, they didn't think too kindly of that. And that was fine. Different strokes for different folks. So yeah, I was into the outdoor scene two hundred percent.

20 Corrigan: Did you have to go far to fish or hunt?

Chambers: No. The farm where we lived had a nice big creek that ran through the property. And it was a slow, sluggish, turbid creek. And you'd catch bullheads and carp and stuff like that. It wasn't a place where you could go catch large-mouthed bass. There were some lakes
25 nearby where we could go bass fishing. But I kind of liked going down to the creek and putting a big wad of worms on a hook and catching three or four or five bullheads and I was happy.

30 Corrigan: Did you gut them and clean them and flay them?

Chambers: Yup. I did the whole works. Yup. If you catch it, you prepare it to eat. Yeah.

Corrigan: Did your mom have, did she prepare them a certain way?

35 Chambers: Yeah. She had only one way to cook them. And of course I would take the head off of the catfish and I'd skin it. Then she'd fry the whole thing. And bullheads aren't all that big, about like that. And she'd fry, pan fry the whole thing. And yup, we'd catch enough for the whole family to eat.

40 **[End Track Eight. Begin Track Nine.]**

Chambers: We didn't have fish all the time, but we had fish quite a bit. We raised chickens and we raised hogs to butcher and that kind of stuff. So we had other sources of protein.

45 Corrigan: Now you attended high school at Lee's Summit High School? Is that correct?

Chambers: Um-hm. Um-hm. Hey, before we get away from the farm deal, always, you know, we were talking about pets. And we had several hundred sheep on the farm.

Corrigan: Did you say several hundred? Or several?

5

Chambers: Yeah. Several hundred. And so we were blessed with little orphan lambs. And bottle-feeding the lamb, and then I'd have this whole menagerie, five or six little lambs that were wanting to be fed every day. And that was my job to feed them. And I also liked pigeons. And so I'd have my dad crawl up in the barn and get me some baby pigeons when they were, oh, they were just in the pin feathery stage. To where I could feed them by hand and imprint them on myself. And they'd be my pets and they'd follow me around on my horse. They were imprinted to me. And they would follow me around. They'd go down to the barn with me. They'd come back to the house. And also, the really neat thing was those pigeons would get imprinted onto those sheep. And they'd ride on their backs. Then you'd look out there in the pasture and here's a pigeon sitting on a sheep's back, okay? On one of these lambs that we'd raised. Because I kept them all in the same shed. Kept the lambs in there, and the pigeons roosted up in the rafters overhead. And when we'd let the lambs out in the morning, here are the pigeons, go out with them and they'd sit on their back all day. It was just, and I took some, Dad took some pictures of that and I took some pictures of that. And we may still have some of those photographs in the old family album. But that was quite a deal. Didn't think nothing about it. But when you look back on it now, it was really pretty special.

10

15

20

Corrigan: And about how old were you?

25

Chambers: Oh, gosh, let's see. I was third grade. Fourth grade. Third and fourth grade. Yeah, it's right when I started going to Grandview, to the big school. Yup, I had all manner of pets. Pigeons were great pets. Crows were great pets. Raccoons were at first till they became sexually mature, and then they got mean and nasty with you.

30

Corrigan: Did you have cages for the crows and that? Or no?

Chambers: Yeah, we had a big chicken house where we'd let them stay. But I'd turn him loose in the daytime. He'd just fly around and go with me where I was going. Yeah. I even had a crow when I lived here in Colombia, when we lived over on High Ridge Drive, I had a pet crow. This was when our son Russ was probably in the second or third grade. And the crow was imprinted on Russ. And I had a dog kennel with a roof on it. And the crow would stay in it. It was four feet wide and twelve feet long. So it was a nice big run. The crow stayed in there. One day he got out and went right over here, went right over here to Russell's school. Russell's school is right through there, okay? One block away. And the crow got out and he was flying around the house. And I was working for the conservation department, I was a biologist. So the teacher, when the crow got out, he heard all these kids over here having a riot. And he liked to be around where the kids were. So he flew from our house, which is about a half a mile away, he flew from over where he could hear these kids. So the crow was up on the school house, he was dive bombing at the girls and whatever. So the teacher called me and said, "Mr. Chambers," she said, "do you have a pet crow?" And I said,

35

40

45

“Yeah,” I said, “he’s at home.” “No, he’s over here at school and he’s dive bombing the girls and he’s got everybody all messed up.” (laughs) And I said, “Well, is Russ there?” “Yep.” So this was the principal, Mr. Lincoln, call me, Dr. Lincoln. I said, “Is Russ there?” And he said, “Yeah, Russ is there.” I said, “Well have all the kids come inside—

5

[End Track Nine. Begin Track Ten.]

Chambers: “—go out there and speak on the loudspeaker and tell everybody to come in the schoolhouse.” And I said, “Send Russ out there.” And I said, “That crow will come right
10 down and Russ can pick him up.” So they did that and so Russ, they called me back at work and said, well, I was already on the way over there. When I got over there, Russ had the crow in his arms. So I took Russ and the crow home. (laughs) Yeah, then I had all kinds of wild critters when I was making wildlife motion pictures. We’ll get into that whenever.

15 Corrigan: Yeah. We’ll get into that later.

Chambers: But the crow experience, you know, I had crows when I was little and I continued to have crows throughout my adult life. Or at least one more. That was the one we called Jerry.

20

Corrigan: Okay. Now right around high school, you began to taxidermy?

Chambers: Yeah. J.W. Ellwood School of Taxidermy. And I still have the books downstairs. And it was, for a farm boy I started doing taxidermy work when I was probably, I was going
25 to say, I was probably eighth grade. Yeah, seventh or eighth grade. And you know, so I enrolled in J.W. Ellwood’s Northwestern School of Taxidermy. And those are classic collectors’ books now, and I have them down there. And they came out in a little pamphlet. And after you complete lesson one was such and such, lesson two and lesson three. And you went through the whole course. And after you finished one book on how to skin a bird, well
30 then you send in a report or a picture or something, and then you advance to the next level. So yeah, I started that when I was way back there. And I mounted a lot of critters. Not mammals, but primarily birds. I was interested in preserving some of the birds that I had collected. So yeah, I mounted ducks and geese and pheasants and stuff like that. We’d go hunting. Quail. And there are some of my mounts still over at the conservation department. I
35 was over there looking the other day at a female prairie chicken that man, I tell you, that mount must be probably 1962, how old it is, it’s perfect. It’s as good a prairie chicken mount as you’ll see anywhere, in any museum. Because I knew my anatomy of these birds. I knew what they looked like. A lot of these taxidermists, especially prairie chickens are hard to do because you know, people look at a picture of a prairie chicken. When they try to replace the
40 air sacs on them and all that, they don’t get nothing right. And they get the necks too long and the legs aren’t positioned properly. But you know, I knew all the anatomical features of these critters. And so my taxidermy and my artwork, I was also a painter and a drawer. And all that stuff, and all that kind of fit right together.

45 Corrigan: I have a question. I’m not as familiar with bird taxonomy as like deer or something.

Chambers: Sure.

Corrigan: A lot of times a deer, you know, they're mounting those on forms and that.

5

Chambers: Yeah. Right.

Corrigan: Skins and that. Is that similar to what they do with birds?

10

Chambers: Yeah, they do that now. Back, back when I—the Northwestern School of Taxidermy method was that you, in those days, a product called excelsior. And excelsior was another word they call it in the books was wood wool. It looked like wool, only it was shredded wood. And you could squish it together and then wrap it with string. You could fashion a body, you'd lay the bird's body here and then you'd grab this wool and you start squeezing it together and wrap it in a string. Then you compare it to what you had over here. You follow me? So you got the proximities right. So that you didn't put a body this big in a skin that little. Yeah, we made, back in those days you made all your own forms. They didn't have, I don't know about—

15

20

[End Track Ten. Begin Track Eleven.]

Chambers: —I think that was about the time they started doing the cast forms for the deer heads and elk heads and stuff. But of course I wasn't into that. All I was doing was birds and squirrels and stuff like that. And I didn't like to do the mammals. I liked to do the birds because I was a bird type person from a little bitty guy. And they were the most intriguing to me, and that's what I worked on. But it was a bit tedious because their skins were really quite tender and easy to tear and hard to sew up if you made a mis-whack. So you had to be very careful how you skin them and very careful how you'd leave the wing bones on and you'd have to tease away the muscle from it and preserve it so that when you'd put it back together the dermestids didn't get into it. And of course back in those days we used Borax, and we could use arsenic. It was pretty elementary. But that was the standard back in those times. Borax came along, we started using Borax. And the 40 Mule Team Borax box. And that was a real good preservative for the skins. And yeah, you'd put a bird together.

25

30

35

Corrigan: Would you put the Borax into the cavity to preserve it?

Chambers: You skin the critter out and all you've got is a bunch of feathers with leg bones and wing bones and the skull. We split them down, back in those days you split them down the back of the head. And then you'd tease away the skin. And be very careful around the eyes so that you didn't—and the fatal mistake was to cut a hole in the eyelid. Then you'd get an eyeball that was bigger than what it was supposed to be. And then you'd have to recreate, everything that you cut away as a muscle, you recreated it with clay. And you preserved the skin with that 40 Mule Team Borax. Then you just rubbed it in. If it was a duck, you'd have to soak that in, oh, gosh, that's what I call polar bear hair cleaner. And it was one of the chlorinated hydrocarbons. It was nasty stuff. And you'd just submerge the skin in it. And it would take the oil out of it, okay? Because they were greasy. By the time you got through

40

45

5 skinning a duck, you'd have grease on the feathers. So you've got to degrease it. And I'd just dunk that whole skin—skull, legs, everything, wings down in there, then get it out. Then I had a great big vat with, oh, it was, it was kind of like powdered talcum that we'd dry them off with. And you'd put it down in there and shake it and keep fluffing it around. And then the feathers would fluff right back out again. And so yeah, it was a long, hard task to skin a bird and get it prepared, defatted and everything, so it wouldn't rot, essentially. So you had to get all that fat out of there. And then clean the skin, clean the feathers so that you didn't get any of that residue.

10 Corrigan: Did you have any problem, or did you have to be careful around the feathers not to—

15 Chambers: Ducks were really tough. The biggest problem with the duck was getting the fat off of it. And I would de-fat it just using a pair of scissors. Just turn the duck skin wrong side. Here's the feathers out here, and here's—you make an incision right down the, right down the breast line and just start peeling it back. But then there was a lot of fat in there. So then you just turn the skin wrong side out and just take a pair of scissors and just cut right along those feather tracks. And just take those chunks of fat about that long and about that thick and just lay them aside. Put them, I had a newspaper laying over here. And just go inch by inch over that whole skin, getting all that fat off of there. Then I'd take that Borax and I'd rub on there. And that would soak up some of what's left. And then they'd go down to the vat with the polar bear hair cleaner. And I don't remember what product that was—

[End Track Eleven. Begin Track Twelve.]

25 Chambers: —it could have been xylol it could have been, I don't know, it's one of those ones you don't want to be messing with. And didn't wear gloves or anything. I mean, this was just a down home deal. (laughs) So anyway, yeah, it was quite a process to prep a bird for either making study skins, and I made a bunch of them when I was at the university, study skins for the university collection over there.

30 Corrigan: Well that's what I was wondering. When you were doing this, when you started off, even till later on, were you trying to, because you could decide in what form they were going to take—

35 Chambers: Yep. Sure.

40 Corrigan: Were you trying to get them to look as natural as possible? Were you trying to get them to, was it a movement, or did it depend on each one that you worked on how it was going to shape up?

45 Chambers: Well it would depend on each bird, what way you wanted to, anatomical position you wanted to capture it in. Ducks I usually did a lot of ducks in flight, because that's where you can see, you can see the speculum on the wings. You can see the nice plumage on the head and the face. You can see like a pintail got a big, long tail. You can fashion that to look just like a real—and I was really good at it. I was a professional taxidermist till I started

working for the conservation department. And then I could no longer get a taxidermy license because at that—when you become an employee of the department, you have permission to collect critters if you need to go out here and collect whatever. You're covered with a migratory bird permit. So the conflict of interests came there. If I was able to go out here and shoot blue-winged teal or whatever and then mount them, well, that wasn't going to work. So I had to give up my taxidermy license. Which was fine. I had another way of making a living then. So, yeah, but I was a licensed taxidermist for years. And I learned it with the J.W. Ellwood thing. And there are two taxidermists in town right now that follow me around and watch me do stuff. And one of them is Megahan, David Megahan. Another one is Jim Cook. And both of them are professional taxidermists right now. They'd come and watch me and study my stuff that I'd done. I saw Jim Cook over at, we had a benefit trap shoot, or a sporting clay shoot this past weekend. I saw him over there at that. So, yeah. And you can make a good living at taxidermy nowadays, you know. But it's a whole different ballgame than what it was when I started. You can get forms for everything now. You can get a form for a duck body, a mallard or a pintail or a loon or whatever else. And back in those days, we made them out of excelsior and wrapped them with springs and created our own necks and wrapped that with string and tied it, you know, you'd take a piece of wire about that long. You'd bend a hook in this end. You'd create the body. Then you'd run that wire clear through and up this way. And hook an end back here in the back. And with your pliers you'd anchor it in there good so it wasn't giving. And you'd make sure the body was wrapped really, really tight. Then you'd wrap the neck. And before you did all this, you'd sharpen the end of that wire. Because it's going to go right through the opening in the skull. Then you'd take it right up through the top of the skull. Then you'd sew up around it. So when you finished up, you had a bird standing up that had a wire running out of his head. Okay? So you'd put a little piece of paper on that and push it down and flatten it out so it looked natural. It was quite a deal. Now they have forms to do all that. You don't even use the duck's bill anymore. You've got an artificial bill, an artificial skull. All you need to do is just skin it. Skin it and de-fat it and you can buy everything else, form ready-made.

30 Corrigan: What were you using back then for eyes?

Chambers: I still have a whole collection of glass eyes. There were two companies that provided glass eyes at that time. Van Dyke's was one of them. They had the best glass eyes that you could get. You could order some glass eyes through these companies that were suggested by this Northwestern School of Taxidermy. But I ordered some from several, and some of them were really cheap, poorly made ones, were painted on the back for the, you know—

[End Track Twelve. Begin Track Thirteen.]

40 Chambers: —for the color of the iris and the pupil was black. But there were some of them that were made in Germany, were glass, were really, really nice glass eyes. And expensive. And they'd come on, a set would come on, you'd get two glass eyes. They'd have a wire about that long. I don't know how they made them. But one glass, you'd have a glass eye here with a wire in it. Okay? So they'd twist two of those. So you had eyes that matched, that looked like each other. And you'd buy them by pairs. And then for the big game, and I never

got into making big game, but the Germans made beautiful glass eyes that they called blue glint. And it was a really, really natural looking eye. And it was concave, convex. And you'd build up around the eyelids and everything and set that baby in there and then draw the skin down around it. But, yeah, so the whole thing was revolutionized when they came out with
5 Styrofoam and poly deals that you could mix one component with another. And you can get those taxidermy supply books now. You can buy whatever you want. Like that otter right there. Meghan mounted that for me. That was one of the otters we had that we used to do shows with. And I'm sure he bought a basic form for that. And then I told him exactly how I wanted it mounted. Because I had a bronze, a friend of mine's got a bronze that's about that
10 tall. And I said, I took that bronze out there and I left it and I said, "Just fashion this otter just exactly like this bronze." Because the guy's got it in his will that when he dies I'm going to get this bronze. And I wanted that to match that. So I took that bronze out there and left it with him. And David put that thing together and its letter perfect.

15 Corrigan: Now how do you spell his last name? David—

Chambers: Yeah, it's M-e-g-a-h-a-n. Like Meghan. M-e-g-a-h-a-n. David Meghan. It's Megann. [pronounces it as two syllables with accent on second] But a lot of people call him Meghan. And the other guy's named Jim Cook. C-o-o-k. I don't think it's got an "e" on it. I
20 think it's just C-o-o-k.

Corrigan: Now how long did it take you before I forget to ask you to do the courses for the J.W. Ellwood—

25 Chambers: Oh, you know, it was an advance yourself deal. The more time you wanted to spend, you know, when you got your first bird and you tried to skin it. You messed, you cut things wrong. So you had to make two or three tries at it to make it work. But you know, I was skillful because I grew up trapping and selling furs. Which, in order to sell a fur, a skunk's pelt or a possum's pelt or a raccoon pelt, you had to be careful the way you skinned
30 it. Not to cut a hole in the fur to ruin it. So I was quite meticulous at how to skin. So I didn't have a lot of problem overcoming the challenge of skinning these things. My problem came, and that, like all taxidermists, was getting the fat off of them. Getting the skin part separated from flesh and from the meat and the fat. That was a real challenge. And then get that thing soaked out to where when it was dried out, after you fluffed it out, then the feathers didn't all
35 stick together. It got nice and fluffy again and looked like a real trophy. Did that answer your question? Is that kind of what you were getting at?

Corrigan: Yeah, that does answer my question. It was kind of just you were self-paced and you just kept going.
40

Chambers: Yeah. You're just self-paced and so what if I had to, you know, I started with, we'd go quail hunting and I'd pick out two or three nice quail. That's back in the days when there were a number of quail around. Pick two or three nice quail. And it would tell in the book how to wrap—
45

[End Track Thirteen. Begin Track Fourteen.]

Chambers: —cotton or paper towel around the mouth so that the blood didn't—[phone ringing] Let that thing ring. So it didn't contaminate them. Save you a whole bunch of time cleaning or whatever. And they'd tell you to make a paper cone and put it down in there and then put it in the freezer and do this and that. So yeah, there was good guidance. It was just a matter of different levels of skill, you being able to do what the book said. And then it was a self-advancing program as you got this and this. You went right on up.

10 Corrigan: And what kind of report were you sending in? You were saying something you were sending in to them?

Chambers: I don't recall. I've got those books downstairs. Or maybe, once you enroll, it could well have been, I know sometimes I sent some pictures. But it may be that once you enroll then on a regular basis, here'd come another book. I don't recall that. And I've got all the books downstairs. I've got two or three collections of them, people have given me some that they started with. But you know, it went through the birds and the mammals and the reptiles and the fish or whatever. But I kind of stopped at the birds. I didn't advance. I didn't advance, I just specialized.

20 Corrigan: Now all these birds that you were mounting, were you able to use the flesh and eat it before you—

Chambers: No. Once you get through skinning one of these things, it's pretty much trashed out. Because you use cornmeal, I used cornmeal to help absorb the blood, you know, as I'd cut down the sternum [makes cutting noise], you know, start laying that back, I'd start putting cornmeal in there, because you get a lot of body fluids. And somewhere there's going to be a hole punched in it where you shot it. That's going to begin to bleed. So you just saturate this thing with cornmeal. Or with that 40 Mule Team Borax. So the body was trashed out. By the time you got it all taken out and laid over here and got another, and you didn't gut it or anything, you wanted the thing to be, you wanted the guts to poke out back where the sacrum is, back on the body part. Didn't mess with even trying to save them. Nuh-uh. Trashed it out.

35 Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: There was nothing salvageable. I guess you could have, if you'd have been careful. But—

40 Corrigan: I wondered if it was too hard. That's why I was asking if it was just—

Chambers: Yeah. It was not a common practice. Because what would happen here, you'd leave, start skinning a bird. Well, you know, its guts are in it. Here you lay it aside and you're at room temperature. Well, the first thing you know, bacteria starts setting in. So it was a don't save the meat deal. Now it's entirely different with big game where you just cape them out, split them down the back of the neck, roll the tendon, cut the head off. Then you got, you know, the meat to salvage and do what you want with it. But I don't think there's any

taxidermist that does a bird that probably eats them. Maybe a turkey or something like that. But I wouldn't. (laughs) In my practice, I wouldn't.

5 Corrigan: Now you said, we're going to talk about photography in a little bit.

Chambers: Yeah.

10 Corrigan: But back at Lee's Summit High School, I read that you had borrowed a camera from a friend, a 35 millimeter camera, somebody had one. But what I want to ask you about is some of the classes you took. Did your school offer any type of—did you take the art classes? Did they have a yearbook, a photograph class? I don't know if they even offered that.

15 Chambers: Yeah, if they did, I was not on the yearbook staff, so I wasn't a photographer for the yearbook. I was into taking pictures of wildlife, and people didn't excite me too much. (laughs) And so consequently, living in the country, and I didn't go to the football games. We had to work after school and didn't have time to be involved in sports.

[End Track Fourteen. Begin Track Fifteen.]

20 Chambers: Didn't play basketball, didn't do track, didn't to this, because we had to get our butt home and get the job done. So that part of my life, so consequently, to get back to your question, no, I was not on the yearbook staff. I was a pretty good artist and I did design in senior year the cover for the yearbook staff. Because I'm an artist.

25 Corrigan: I wasn't sure if you took any art classes in high school. If they had that, even.

30 Chambers: No, I didn't take any art class. I took industrial arts, which is what got me a scholarship to go to Central Missouri State University. I went down there on a proposed engineering scholarship. But I had already figured out by the time I got there where I was headed in life. So I used that as a gateway to get in school. Took off in chemistry and biology from there.

35 Corrigan: And did you take a lot of, since you knew you wanted to go into science, did you take all the science classes in high school?

Chambers: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Took all the science classes. Biology and whatever else they offered. Yeah, I did well in all those classes.

40 Corrigan: And you knew you wanted to be a biologist.

45 Chambers: Yeah. You know, from the time I was a little kid and I started messing around with these bird flashcards and being out there with these critters all the time, yeah, it didn't take me very long. And some of the reports that I wrote even when I was back in grade school about what I wanted to do in life. I wanted to be what they call a flyway biologist. A flyway biologist is a waterfowl biologist that flies an airplane and counts the ducks and

geese, okay? That's what they called them back when I was a little kid was a flyway biologist. There was one for every flyway. There was one for the Atlantic, Mississippi, the Central Flyway and the Western Flyway. And that was my goal in life was to be a flyway biologist. Well, I got the biologist part but I didn't get the flyway part. Because I became
5 interested in other things. Photography and things like that. But I set my sights early in life on a biological career and that's what I developed. And stayed with it. And you know, the biology part led to the photography part. And the photography part led to everything that I've done in life.

10 Corrigan: Did you, I forgot to ask a little bit earlier, but did your parents, did they really value education? Did they really push you in—

Chambers: Not really. I was, you know, I was probably—I was different than my brother and sisters. None of them even went to college. I was the only one out of the four of us that
15 attended, that got a degree from a university. And my parents really didn't push it much. It was kind of on my own initiative. And my aunt and uncle that didn't have any children were financially well enough that they could provide me some money to go to school, besides what I earned when I was working in the summertime. So that was the way that I was able to get an education. But as far as Dad and Mom forking over the money for me to go to school,
20 that wasn't even in the books. We couldn't afford it.

Corrigan: You just mentioned working in the summers. What kinds of jobs did you do in the summer? Are we talking high school?

25 Chambers: Yeah, we're talking high school. We're talking farm jobs like—

Corrigan: Putting up hay?

Chambers: Putting up hay. Mowing, filling silos. You know, all those farm type activities.
30 Building fence when it's rainy out there like it is today. That's a fence building day. And planting corn when it's spring. And picking corn when it's fall. And the whole nine yards. Yeah.

Corrigan: Were you just saving that money?

35

Chambers: Yeah. You know, back when I started earning money, it was like 50 cents an hour. And that was my first earned money other than some taxidermy that I sold, which was cheap. And by the hour, it didn't—

40 **[End Track Fifteen. Begin Track Sixteen.]**

Chambers: —didn't pay up to 50 cents an hour. But anyway yeah, I started working for 50 cents an hour. And graduated up, I mean, moved up to where I earned 75 cents an hour. I don't think I ever did earn a dollar an hour. And then was old enough to go to college. I
45 probably did, in college days, earn a dollar an hour. But that was tops.

Corrigan: While you were in college. Okay.

5 Chambers: Yeah. Right. Yup, yup, a dollar an hour was top wage. For farm stuff. That was the whole nine yards. Something to do every day. Building fence or vaccinating cattle or doing whatever.

Corrigan: Now you said, you went to Central Missouri State University.

10 Chambers: Uh-hm.

Corrigan: But primarily you picked that because you won a scholarship there?

15 Chambers: Yeah. I was fortunate enough to win, to be awarded a scholarship in mechanical drawing. Because I was good at drafting. Really good at it. I was a good letterer, because I'm an artist. And we'd have these competitions. Back then they had regional competitions. Say like Central Missouri University would have a competition for all the schools. Raytown, Lee's Summit, Grandview, all the schools in a particular region. And we'd send our drawings down there and they would judge them according to the quality of the lines. I don't know if you know anything about what I'm talking about now. But anyway, the quality of the lines.
20 You know, you'd push down certain hard with a certain pencil if you want to get one kind of a line. You push down certain hard with another pencil, you're going to get another kind of a line. So they judged our drawings based on how good our lettering was without using a lettering, you know, we used a lettering guide just to describe the three lines across there. Then you did up, did all your artwork in between. And it wasn't hard, because I was good
25 enough at it that I could just print right along there. And it all looked like it came out of a repetigraph machine. And so anyway, but my drawings, they were consistent with their lines. The junctions were all good. The lettering was fine. So I was awarded a scholarship based on that in engineering. And I had no plans on being an engineer. I thought I might, at one time, I wanted to be an outdoor type person. But I used that as a get in the door deal to get to where I
30 wanted to go. And it worked out fine. I mean, after the second year, I had to decide, okay, are you going to continue as an engineer or are you going to fan off into biology? And so right away, I loaded my curriculum with all the biological subjects I could take, like plant physiology and botany and environmental whatever. Back in those days, they didn't have all these environmental studies that we have now. You know, it was fairly basic stuff like
35 biology and chemistry and physics, and this and this and this. So I loaded up my curriculum with those kind of things because I knew where I wanted to go. And these are the steps it was going to take me to get there. But it was riding on this deal, it was getting a scholarship. But my aunt and uncle were providing input for my room and board and stuff like that.

40 Corrigan: So did you have to at the beginning take some engineering classes and—

Chambers: Yeah, but it was all pretty elementary stuff.

45 Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: Yeah. I didn't, I never did take a course in calculus or any of that. I never got that far up the ladder. I was already off on plant physiology, human anatomy and that kind of stuff.

5 Corrigan: You said about two years in was when you had to decide?

Chambers: Yup. About a year and a half, I decided, I don't know how, I don't remember how long my scholarship was for. I think it was a two-year deal. And at the beginning, the second year, I had to decide which way I was headed. And so, and at that time, the
10 scholarship dropped. They cut it off. If I wasn't going to be an engineer, you're not going here. But I was already entrenched then. Knew where I was going.

Corrigan: That's in Warrensburg.

15 Chambers: Yeah. That's Central Missouri University.

Corrigan: How far away was that from—

Chambers: That was from, from Lee's Summit that was 30 miles. Yeah.
20

[End Track Sixteen. Begin Track Seventeen.]

Chambers: And I commuted back and forth for, let's see. The first, I lived on the campus, I'm trying to remember. I lived on the campus three years and I commuted the last year. So I
25 was on the campus three years and then I commuted back and forth.

Corrigan: So you lived in the dorms, then?

Chambers: Yeah, uh-hm.
30

Corrigan: Okay. And then the fourth year, you commuted back and forth to Lee's Summit?

Chambers: Right. Because we lived—

35 Corrigan: You graduated in 1958?

Chambers: Let's see. I went '54 to '58. Yeah, graduated CMSU in '58. And let's see, in 2002, they gave me an honorary doctorate. I think it was 2002. I'd have to look down there.

40 Corrigan: Yeah, I have that written down. I was going to ask you that at the end, but—

Chambers: Yeah, yeah. Go ahead. We can wait. We can wait.

Corrigan: We can talk, we can ask now. I have it in 2001.
45

Chambers: Yeah, I think it's 2002. But it may be 2001. I'm not sure. We'll have to get the dates straight on that.

5 Corrigan: That was an honorary doctorate?

Chambers: Uh-huh. In science. Honorary doctor of science.

10 Corrigan: Okay. And did that, were you an active alumni member? Or how did that come about? How did you find out? How did they select you? Did you—

15 Chambers: The committee looked at my resume, okay? And they saw what all I'd been involved in. Lifetime achievement award. I won television Emmys for my movies I did. You know, one thing on another, publications in the *Audubon Magazine*. Professional publications while I was in graduate school. And all that stuff added up to where they thought I was worthy of an honorary doctorate degree. And that was fine. That was a nice experience.

Corrigan: Did someone nominate you?

20 Chambers: Yeah, I guess so. I don't know all the if's and and's about how it happened. I don't know.

Corrigan: But did you know that you were under consideration?

25 Chambers: Yeah. I knew I was under consideration.

Corrigan: Did you have to provide them anything? Documentation or anything?

30 Chambers: Not very much. They pretty much did it on their own. Of course my resume, you can get on my website and look at it.

Corrigan: Yeah, I've seen it, yeah.

35 Chambers: It's a four-pager. It's fairly explicit on—I haven't updated it lately and I should. But anyway, yeah.

Corrigan: But was that enjoyable? I mean, that's a big honor to be—

40 Chambers: Oh, yeah. It was a lot of fun to go back. And you know, I got the robe and the gown—

Corrigan: And the hood.

45 Chambers: And the hood. And all that stuff. And yeah, when I went to our granddaughter's graduation I was watching all those people march in. Yeah, that was a fun deal. Yeah, it was a highlight. No question about it.

Corrigan: That's good. We're going to go back a little bit.

Chambers: Yeah.

5 Corrigan: But back to that Central Missouri State, I did see you—and after this I was going to move into photography. But you did take a photography course there, correct?

Chambers: Yeah, I took, yeah, Mel Jenkins taught a course in photography. And you know, he knew I was quite a photographer anyway. And he was a neat little guy. And he said,
10 “Glenn,” he said, “I know you already know a lot about photography.” But he said, “There’s a lot you can learn about darkroom processing and things like that.” Which I didn’t know nothing about. All I knew was take a box Brownie out here or a slide camera and take pictures and send it in and get the stuff back. So I didn’t have, I had essentially no knowledge about processing film and printing and that stuff. So that was the, probably the most
15 beneficial part I got out of the photography class. Because of my background in artwork and because of my just built-in skills for composition and stuff like that, I didn’t learn much of that in the course. I already knew it, and it just came natural with me. I didn’t have to learn it. But this mechanical type stuff, putting this in a container and development, shaking it, and develop it for four and a half minutes and transfer it to here. And you know, do all this in the
20 darkroom and stuff. Yeah, that was, that was really interesting to me. And that was very beneficial.

Corrigan: Was this class, was it part of, I’m trying to think of how they framed it. Was it just called photography or was it part—
25

[End Track Seventeen. Begin Track Eighteen.]

Corrigan: —of journalism? Was it communications?

30 Chambers: No. It was just a course in general photography.

Corrigan: Stand-alone course.

Chambers: Yup. Stand-alone course. A how-to-do-it deal.
35

Corrigan: Did you get assignments to go out and shoot certain things?

Chambers: Yeah. Got assignments to go shoot certain things. Of course, everything I selected was always around going on a quail hunt or something like this. Which none of the
40 other kids did. So my stuff really shone, because here I got a real fancy dog on point, or a quail jumping up, or something like that. And yeah, and you mentioned back there earlier about borrowing a camera. I didn’t have my own camera. And I don’t, to this day, recall who I borrowed that 35 millimeter slide camera from. But I know it shot Kodachrome. Back in those days, it was Kodachrome 25. That was the film speed of it was 25. But I took that thing
45 clear and I must have gave it back to whoever I borrowed it from, because I don’t have it anymore. And when I started working for the conservation department in 1961, well Jack

Stanford, who was a quail biologist, was a real good photographer in his own right. And he knew about me and what I was going to be all about. And he said, “We’ve got to get you a good camera.” So I started with an Exakta VX2A. And then I used that thing, I carried it on the Caterpillar, you know, my first job with the department was managing a wildlife area
5 down by Saint Louis. The August A. Busch Memorial Wildlife Area. And I managed that. And my daily job was running the bulldozer, whatever. So I carried that goofy camera with me all the time. And you know, I’d see baby rabbits or I’d see this or that and I’d stop and take pictures. And if I find a quail nest, I’d go get me a photography blind after work and go
10 out there and set it up and take pictures. And you know, but that Exakta carried me through probably the first, well, I got to be a biologist. They promoted me from there to a biologist here. And I think that was in 1961. And then I got to know Charlie Schwartz.

Corrigan: Yeah, I was going to ask you about him later.

15 Chambers: Yeah, yeah. So then I got into Leicas. So I went from the Exakta to the Leicas. We can talk about that later.

Corrigan: Yeah. Going back just a little bit, back to the photography class, I want to ask you another question. So that was your first darkroom experience?

20 Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: That was the first of you’re opening up the film, you’re doing it in a—

25 Chambers: Yeah, yup, yup, right.

Corrigan: —black bag.

30 Chambers: Yeah, yeah.

Corrigan: And you’re processing it with the chemicals and the water and drying them—

Chambers: Yup, yup, yup. The whole nine yards. Yeah.

35 Corrigan: And then where you had to do the actual exposure. So they were teaching you everything.

Chambers: Yeah. Yeah. We learned the whole nine yards, yeah. And it was a good experience because otherwise, that whole part of my education concerning photography
40 would have been a blank. Yeah. But that one course did it for me. Because then I followed through and I went from the plastic tanks, I got the stainless steel ones. And I got the washers and I bought a Leica enlarger, which was the best they made back in those days. A Leica enlarger. And I did my own. I’ve got lots and lots of prints that I made way back. They’re
45 just black and white.

Corrigan: Yeah, I was going to say, these are all black and white.

Chambers: Yeah, they're all black and white. Yup. And you know, I've photographed, processed the film, and I still have lots of those, that film, I cut it in strips about that long. That one, two, three, four frames. And keep them all together in an envelope. With a label of
5 what it was and where I took them and all that stuff. And you know, those are still really good images. I could put them back, then when I went from black and white, color started coming on. And that camera that I borrowed from whoever it was, I shot black and white film in it.

10 Corrigan: Mm hmm. Back in high school. Black and white film.

Chambers: Mm hmm.

[End Track Eighteen. Begin Track Nineteen.]

15 Chambers: And so, yeah.

Corrigan: So that class took care of—then you had the full spectrum from taking the picture to the final print.

20 Chambers: Yup. That's right. And that was a real asset. Because I learned about exposure. I learned about all those things. That's the way to learn it.

Corrigan: Because it's an art form. To do it yourself. Whether you have to have a three-second exposure or a ten-second.

25 Chambers: Right.

Corrigan: What effect you're going for.

30 Chambers: Yup, what you're going for.

Corrigan: What size print you're making. Do you remember, I'm thinking about the class still. What about supplies? I mean, was paper expensive back then? Was film expensive? When you're out there shooting it and—

35 Chambers: Yeah. Well, we had to buy everything on our own. The school didn't supply anything. All they supplied was a darkroom. We had to buy our own chemicals. And so—

40 Corrigan: Did you have your own camera, too?

Chambers: Yeah, that's the one I was using, this borrowed one.

Corrigan: Oh. Still in college, you were using the borrowed one.

45 Chambers: Yeah. Uh-hm.

Corrigan: Okay.

5 Chambers: Yeah. Because yeah, because I didn't get my own camera until I graduated out of, well, Jack Stanford in 1961 is when I got my first own 35 millimeter camera.

Corrigan: And that was the Exakta. What was the—

10 Chambers: Yeah, it was called an Exakta VX Roman numeral II A.

Corrigan: Okay.

15 Chambers: That was one of the first single-reflex cameras they came out with. And it was made in Germany. And it was a good camera.

Corrigan: You had to buy your own chemicals and everything in that class?

Chambers: Yeah. Uh-hm. We had to buy our own, yeah. Chemicals and paper.

20 Corrigan: But they had all the equipment for—

Chambers: Yeah, we had all the equipment. Yup. They had the tanks and that stuff, and the vats that you mixed in and all that stuff. We just had to do our own, we provided our own stuff that we're going to, disposables.

25 Corrigan: Okay. So you graduated there in 1958—

Chambers: Let's see, graduated from—

30 Corrigan: Central Missouri State in 1958.

Chambers: Yeah. Yeah.

35 Corrigan: And then I saw later on that you graduated in 1960 with your masters of arts in wildlife management from the University of Missouri.

Chambers: Uh-hm.

40 Corrigan: Did you go straight to the university to do that? Or did you have any time period in between there?

45 Chambers: No. I went, when I finished my undergraduate degree, I knew I wanted to go to graduate school. I knew I wanted to get a masters degree. And my grades were good. Especially in all the wildlife courses. And so I didn't have any trouble getting into graduate school. And I entered graduate school as a fisheries person, fisheries. Well, that was, that's

the easiest way you could get in back then. Most of the wildlife courses, all the slots were taken. For graduate students.

5 Corrigan: Okay. So you started in fisheries.

Chambers: Yeah, I started, one semester I was in fisheries. Then Dr. Tom Baskett took a liking to me and they had a Edward K. Love Fellowship open up. And I didn't like the fishery part of it very well, anyway. I was more into the warm-blooded critters than I was into cold-blooded ones. So that worked out fine. They needed a slot for another fisheries person. And they had opened up a slot for a wildlife person. So I just moved right into there. There were no hard feelings with anyone. Everything marched ahead.

10 Corrigan: And you were still able to get it done, it looks like, in just two years.

15 Chambers: Yeah. Two years, yeah.

Corrigan: And that was going full time?

Chambers: Yup. Full time, summer. Yup. Once you embark on that program, it's no looking back. You know, you stay right with it.

20 Corrigan: And you said, that's where you mentioned earlier when we started that you taught an ornithology class?

25 Chambers: Yeah. Taught ornithology. Mammalogy. Yeah. Yeah, those were the two courses. But my strong suit was birds. Ornithology class. Yeah.

Corrigan: So you had moved to Columbia. We'll get into this later. But have you lived here ever since then? The 1960s?

30 Chambers: Yup. Well, see, when I graduated, when I got my masters degree, I was on, before I had my degree, the conservation department hired me.

[End Track Nineteen. Begin Track Twenty.]

35 Corrigan: Oh, okay.

Chambers: And so I finished my thesis while I was on the job.

40 Corrigan: Oh, okay.

Chambers: Okay?

45 Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: And so I was really employed, the day I got out of school, I was off to employment. And I still had a thesis to write. Half of it. I already had a lot of it done. The basics of it were done. But I had to do the refining of it and getting it past your committee and all that stuff. But I did all that while I was on the job. Worked eight hours a day plus do my homework and get my thesis done. And published two papers. Published two papers in the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Corrigan: So you've been in Columbia since the 1960s, then.

10 Chambers: Mm hmm. Yeah, I moved to Columbia in 1961.

Corrigan: And do I have the right date when you graduated in 1960 here? Or no?

15 Chambers: Yeah. I think, let's see, '58 to '60. Then I went to work, the department hired me and I went down to the Busch area and I managed that for nine months. And then I transferred to Columbia in 1961, yeah.

20 Corrigan: Okay. So you've been here since then. Well, we've been going exactly an hour and a half if you want to stop for today.

Chambers: We're okay if you want to keep going, if you've got a subject you want to—

25 Corrigan: Well, what I was going to cover next was going to get into the photography and then conservation. But we can go a little bit longer today if you want.

Chambers: Yeah. That's fine.

Corrigan: And then, I don't think, we're not going to finish today.

30 Chambers: No, unh-uh. We won't get this done today.

Corrigan: But maybe we'll go another fifteen minutes?

35 Chambers: Yeah, that's fine.

Corrigan: Because what I want to start with is to go back a little bit. I want to ask you, do you remember the first time you picked up a camera?

40 Chambers: Yeah. The first time I picked up a camera is when I was, I'd say I was probably eight years old. And my dad, my mother, my dad always kind of liked to take a lot of pictures. When we went quail hunting we had coon dogs and we had outdoor activities. And he kind of had a knack for taking pictures. So he had a 620 Box Brownie, okay? And they have one out here at, Roger Berg had one in his collection. And Jeff, now, since Rog passed away, Jeff has, but they've got one out there. And it's a camera that's about that tall and it's about that wide and about that long. Okay?

45

Corrigan: So it's about, let's describe that for the audio. So it's about—

Chambers: It's about, okay, I'm going to say, let me get a ruler. Let me get a ruler.

5 Corrigan: So it looks like you're about ten inches.

Chambers: It's less than that. It's about eight—

Corrigan: Eight inches—

10

Chambers: —long, from front to back, from lens to the back is about eight inches. It's about three and a half inches—

Corrigan: Wide.

15

Chambers: —from side to side. And it was about five inches tall.

Corrigan: Okay.

20

Chambers: Okay. That's roughly how big the camera was. And it had a shutter in it you pull, you push down and it made an exposure. Then you had to twist it. It was a 620 film size. And you had to twist it and watch in the little, there was a little window in the back and you twist it and your watch goes ahead. Each, each frame was numbered. So you twist until you see the "2" is completely filling the circle. Okay? Then you know you're ready to click it again.

25

Corrigan: And is this a roll that's rolling through there?

Chambers: Yeah, that's a roll that's rolling through there. Now I had nothing to do with the process. We took that to the store and sent it in and had it processed. So I didn't know

30

nothing about that.

Corrigan: And how big was the roll? How big are we—

Chambers: The roll was, well, it would fit inside that camera because I had to turn this way.

35

Corrigan: So about four inches?

Chambers: Yeah, yeah.

40

Corrigan: Four by four, almost? Were they square? Or more rectangular?

Chambers: The pictures were rectangular. On that particular camera, I'd say they were about three inches wide by, three by four and a half, or something like that.

45

Corrigan: Okay. Three by four and a half.

Chambers: Yeah. Roughly. So then you'd push down on the thing that moved the shutter. The shutter release, and what you call it. Then you twist it. Because you had, you had to roll that into the roll. Then there was another number come up in the back. When number two came up, you know to stop.

5

[End Track Twenty. Begin Track Twenty-One.]

Chambers: Okay? You clicked, and then you knew you were locked in. And you were ready to take another picture. You'd go over here and this time you'd pull up on it. You'd pull up and then you'd twist it and then you push down. Then you twist and then you pull up. So Dad had that camera. And it was not made out of plastic. It was made out of wood with a cloth glued on protective covering.

10

Corrigan: On the inside or on the out?

15

Chambers: On the outside. I don't know what the inside, the inside was black. I can remember looking at it. But anyway, it had, the hardware was—this dog wants to do something. [dog enters the room] What do you want to do here? Anyway.

20

Corrigan: So there was a cloth outside.

Chambers: Yup. It was cloth adhered to the wooden frame of it. It was real thin wood like veneer. And it had a cloth glued to it. And Kodak made it. It was made by Kodak.

25

Corrigan: Oh, it was Kodak?

Chambers: Yeah.

Corrigan: How heavy was it?

30

Chambers: Oh—Let me put her outside. [pause]

Corrigan: Okay. Hold on. Let me turn it back on again. Okay. So it was—

35

Chambers: Yeah. Kodak made the camera. I think it was called a Kodak Box Brownie.

Corrigan: Wasn't very heavy, though.

Chambers: No. Unh-uh. It wasn't heavy at all. Lightweight. And you just load the film. Then you'd close it and then just keep rolling it and rolling it. Then you'd finally get all the components were in the dark. And then you're good to go. You didn't have to be in the darkroom to load it. You could load it right out here in the daylight.

40

Corrigan: Okay. Then you had to take that film to the town? Or to the store? Where did you take it?

45

Chambers: Yeah. After you finished, you'd get eight, I think eight exposures on a roll.

Corrigan: Okay.

5 Chambers: Then you'd keep rolling, keep rolling, keep rolling. And it would finally encapsulate itself. Then you'd put it in an envelope and take it to town and send it to have it processed. And I don't remember where that was. I don't know. But then you'd get the—

Corrigan: But somewhere in Lee's Summit there.

10

Chambers: No, I think you had to mail it in to Chicago or some place. Yeah.

Corrigan: Oh, okay. Do you remember how much was a roll of film back then? Or how much it was to get the prints made?

15

Chambers: No, I don't. I could—

Corrigan: Was it expensive? Or was it reasonable? Do you remember that at all?

20

Chambers: It was fairly expensive. The film was fairly expensive and the processing was fairly expensive.

Corrigan: And did they send back good or bad pictures?

25

Chambers: Yeah. You'd get back everything. Everything was printed. You'd get the negative back and a print.

Corrigan: And would they all come back, is this three by five?

30

Chambers: Um-hm. They were all the same size. All the same size. In a little package deal.

Corrigan: And you think that was all through the mail then.

Chambers: And I think that was all sent to Kodak. I think it went right back to Kodak.

35

Corrigan: Okay.

Chambers: I think that's what those envelopes said on them when we got them back and opened them up. Yeah. Processing by Kodak. Yeah.

40

Corrigan: And then did you, where did you buy the film? They'd send a new roll with each one? Or did you have to—

45

Chambers: No, I think we went to the store and bought film. I don't remember where a film store would be. Or maybe it did come through the mail. I don't recall.

Corrigan: Okay. And primarily, especially when you said you were a boy, you focused on animals, right?

Chambers: Um-hm. Right.

5

Corrigan: Was it always animals? Or just outdoor scenes?

Chambers: No, I was never in, and even today, I'm not into landscape pictures or stuff like that. It's animals close up, or as close up as I could get.

10

Corrigan: So always from the beginning.

Chambers: Yup.

15

Corrigan: So when you were a boy, you started just taking everything around the farm? Pictures of birds?

20

Chambers: Yeah. And our dog. I'd go, you know, quail hunting with Dad and carry that goofy camera with me. When the dogs are on point, I'd go down there and take a picture of them. You probably saw in there somewhere where I sawed the corner off of the smokehouse door. Did you see that story? (laughs)

Corrigan: Yeah.

25

Chambers: Okay. We had two bird dogs and one coon hound.

[End Track Twenty-One. Begin Track Twenty-Two.]

30

Chambers: And so the farm way of life was that we fed these dogs what they call cracklings. And that's, when you render lard, then when you squeeze the lard out of it, that's the part of the pig's skin and a layer of fat about that thick that you squeeze the lard out of, okay, and what's left over is what we call cracklings. And you can buy them at—

35

Corrigan: Yeah. They still sell them. Yeah.

40

Chambers: Anyway, so we'd go to, R.B. Rice had a packing company there in Lee's Summit. We'd go in there, or R.B. Rice had one and Charlie Oldham had one, too. Oldham's farm sausage and R.B. Rice sausage. R.B. Rice is still, and maybe Oldham, but both of them were headquartered there in Lee's Summit. So we'd go in there and just take a feed sack, you know what I mean?

Corrigan: Yeah.

45

Chambers: Like a feed sack—

Corrigan: Like a burlap bag feed sack.

Chambers: And they'd get back here in a cold room and they'd scoop those cracklings in a sack and we'd keep them in a garbage can or something where the mice wouldn't get them. Anyway, that's what we fed our dogs were those cracklings. So we'd put those cracklings out
5 there. There was a big, almost round, it wasn't a hewn out rock, but it was a big, flat rock. It was about that thick. And it was big around. It was like from there—

Corrigan: It's about eight inches thick.

10 Chambers: Yeah. It was about eight inches thick and about probably four feet in diameter, roughly. Pretty big. And it was—

Corrigan: Okay. Big rock.

15 Chambers: Yeah, it was, it was, the threshold for getting up into the smokehouse. I mean, you step up on that. And it's a nice big rock. And then you open the smokehouse door and go in the smokehouse, okay? And that's where we fed the dogs. We just dumped those
20 cracklings out, a couple of scoops out there and go turn the dogs loose. And everybody come up and had cracklings. And when, then let them run for a while, then call them back and tie them up again, okay? So that was the deal. Well, after those dogs are finished eating, of course, they didn't lick up all the crumbs completely. Because we fed them a good generous amount, and they didn't have to lick the rocks clean. Well anyway, those cracklings, if you know anything about them, there's little, there are crumbles that are left behind. And like that
25 Carolina wren that was here a minute ago, Carolina wrens, cardinals, sparrows, house sparrows, all those birds found out where the feed station was. Let me put her outside.

Corrigan: Hold on one second. [pause] Okay. We're back. So you were talking about these birds.

30 Chambers: We've got these birds, cardinals and blue jays and any number of farmyard birds. Starlings and sparrows, cowbirds, would congregate around this. Because they knew where the food was, okay? It wasn't like we were making a feeding station, because we weren't. We were feeding the dogs. And the birds were the benefactors. So anyway, I got to watching those birds, the chickadees, they were hopping around in there. And everybody getting their
35 little bite and fighting a little bit and whatever. So I got the idea that I'd take this camera. And if I sawed the bottom off of that smokehouse door, if I sawed a corner off of, you know, the door comes down like this, if I sawed a 45 degree angle like that, I could set this camera right there and I can close the smokehouse door and I can be inside and the birds can be from here to my foot. Okay? Then I can [makes shutter noise] and I can [shutter noises] turn it and
40 get pictures. And that's what I did. And the unhappy part was that when Dad came home and saw I sawed the corner off the smokehouse door, he didn't like that too well. Because then the cats could get in the smokehouse and everybody could come and go in the smokehouse and that was not a good deal. But I didn't get thrashed for it. It was part of my—but that's the way I took the first wildlife pictures that I ever took.

45

Corrigan: Now did that camera have—you had no control over—

Chambers: No exposure or nothing.

Corrigan: It was always just—

5

Chambers: All you do is point and shoot. It was a big version of point and shoot. You could get different, back then they were called Panachrome or something. But in today's language it would be like Triax and—

10 **[End Track Twenty-Two. Begin Track Twenty-Three.]**

Chambers: —you could get different emulsion speeds. I don't remember what Dad bought. He probably bought, I know he didn't buy the high emulsion stuff because it was usually too hot, you know what I mean? Overexposed. Anyway, I don't remember what it was called.

15

Pentatonic X or something. But that was, that was about what we used. And I took pictures like that from a little bitty kid. And then I carried that on through. But I didn't really get into the photography blinds and all that stuff until after I got a good little single-lens reflex camera, my little Exakta. And that's when I started using photography blinds and tripods and getting real serious about taking pictures. Because the rest of the time, you know, I was busy

20

in school. I could take a picture of my pet crow or I could take a picture of a pet raccoon or whatever I had around. Squirrels, I had two pet squirrels. I could take pictures of those little guys. But it was nothing sophisticated. It was just a kind of a point and shoot deal.

Corrigan: Now with those little birds, could they hear it when you took the picture? Did they fly off and you had to wait till they'd come back? Or no?

25

Chambers: Yeah, it made a pretty good click. It would go about like, "click, click." It would make a loud clicking noise. It wasn't quiet like our cameras are now.

30

Corrigan: Okay. So they would fly off and you'd wait till they came back.

Chambers: Yeah, they'd fly off, but they'd come right back. It didn't take them two minutes and they'd be right back in there again. Especially with all the hoopla that was going on around, getting the food. It wasn't like scaring a rough grouse off of the log and then having to wait three hours for him to come back. Nothing like that.

35

Corrigan: Okay. Well, I think this is a good place to stop.

Chambers: Good.

40

Corrigan: Because next time I want to get into actually a lot more about photography and then conservation.

Chambers: Okay. Sure.

45

Corrigan: And then start talking about some of your actual jobs that you were doing in the field and all that. So, and I hear your dog barking, so I think she's ready to come back in.

Chambers: Yup.

5

Corrigan: So we'll end today. It's about 3:30. And we'll pick up another day.

Chambers: Perfect.

10 **[End Session.]**